DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 163 563 EA 010 999

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TITLE Investigating Control: A Framework and Some Research Findings.
PUB DATE 21 Jun 78
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Canadian School Trustees' Association Congress on Education (1st, Toronto, Ontario, June 17-21, 1978); Figures I and II may not reproduce clearly

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Board of Education Policy; *Board of Education Role; *Decision Making; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Models; *Policy Formation
IDENTIFIERS British Columbia; Control

ABSTRACT

The control exerted by boards of education may be described by measuring what is controlled, what types of control are used, and at what level control is exerted. A model designed to measure these factors was tested in a random sample of 21 British Columbia school boards. The major findings revealed that school board decisions tended to concentrate in the operational areas of staff personnel, finance, and business management, while curriculum and instruction received the least attention. The majority of decisions made were at a routine or maintenance level rather than at either a policy-making or short-term level. An investigation of relationships between contextual variables and control revealed the tendency of boards making greater numbers of decisions to concentrate more on trivial matters than on policy matters. Greater local fiscal effort seemed related to greater involvement of boards in school-community relations decisions. Greater local fiscal effort and greater district size together seemed accompanied by greater board emphasis on curriculum and instruction. The report concludes with recommendations to school boards for effective use of time and effort, as well as recommendations for further research. (Author/PGD)

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INVESTIGATING CONTROL: A FRAMEWORK AND SOME RESEARCH FINDINGS

A Paper Presented to

The First Canadian Congress on Education

by

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21st June 1978

EA 010 999

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INTRODUCTION

This paper reports an attempt to construct and apply a framework pertinent to the description of the control exerted by boards of education. Based upon the relationship between control and decision-making, the development of the framework focussed upon three questions, namely, what is controlled? What type of control is exerted? And what level of control is exerted?

Two considerations were involved in the application of the framework. First, control was described in terms of the decision emphasis placed by boards on each component of the control framework. Second, decision emphases for these categories were examined in terms of their relationship to some school board contextual variables.

The orientation of this paper, therefore, is threefold. It describes:

(1) The need for a definition of control and the development of the framework;

(2) The application of the framework;

(3) Research findings concerning (a) decision emphases; and (b) possible relationships.

Finally, some conclusions and recommendations of significance for school boards are presented.

THE NEED FOR A DEFINITION OF CONTROL

The subject of control in organizations has been investigated in a variety of organizational contexts and from different perspectives. One of the first empirical studies of control was that which was conducted by Holden, Fish and Smith in 1941, in which control practices in thirty one leading American corporations were investigated. Since that time, studies have concerned such points of emphasis as control practices in organizations (Villers, 1964; Deming, 1968); the effect of strategies of control upon organizational structure (Child, 1972) and upon organizational behavior (Child, 1973); the effect of control distribution on organizational effectiveness (Bachman, Smith and Slesinger, 1969) and the "synergistic" nature of control in organizations (Tannenbaum, 1968).

In education, studies have investigated the relation of control structure to dimensions of organizational climate (Otto and Velman, 1967), and to the willingness of teachers to adopt trusting attitudes (Belasco, 1972).

Prominent authorities on school boards in the Canadian context have addressed the issue of control in terms of control distribution among levels in the educational system. They have emphasized the political ramifications which this entails (Hodgson, 1968; Langlois, 1974; Cistone, 1975; Bargen, 1976). Yet little attention has been given to defining the elements of control exercised at what Ziegler and Jennings referred to as specific "policy levels" in the organization (1974:12). There remains a need for a framework for descriptions as to types of control exercised, the individuals or levels which exercise them and the levels of decision

at which they are exercised.

Several writers have indicated that the concept of control remains problematic. Dauten, Gammill and Robinson (1958:42), for example, have observed that control has long been considered to be "one of the least understood areas of management activity." Jerome (1961:42) stated that "the word control has the serious shortcoming of having different meanings in different contexts." More recently, Reeves and Woodward (1970:38) have pointed out how, in the literature related to organizational behaviour, "there is ambiguity in the use of the word control." Finally, Eilon (1971:14) found it surprising how loosely the term is employed in the management literature.

Anthony (1965:1) has suggested that: "To be useful, material dealing with any broad subjects needs to be organized within a framework of topics and subtopics." This paper represents an approach to the concept of control from the perspective of such a framework in that it attempts to move away from the treatment of organizational control in research as a general "unidimensional" phenomenon. It provides a means by which to determine how certain facets of control might receive greater prominence than others at specific levels in an organization and how certain contextual variables might influence this. The major significance of a framework is summarized in the following comment by Anthony (1965:3):

> If a proper framework exists, together with generally agreed upon definitions and concepts for the main topics, (the researcher) could present new ideas relating to specific subtopics without all this repetition or likelihood of misinterpretation.

Three control elements "setting standards and objectives," "monitoring" and "taking corrective action" are given prominence in management theory.

Luthans (1973:259) noted that control is sometimes mistakenly equated with only one of these elements. One might therefore question the reliability of studies which are based on the assumption that the concept of control has similar connotations for different groups and individuals.

The above-mentioned elements, together with a categorization of decisions according to level of importance, and an examination of operational areas controlled, provide a basis from which to define and describe control in education in more precise terms than general discussions of "who controls what" have to date provided.

DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

In constructing a framework relevant to the investigation of control, several concepts were drawn together and integrated. This involved, first, the presentation of theoretical definitions of control and the identification of common characteristics; second, specification of three control dimensions frequently mentioned in the literature; third, discussion of the importance of decisions as the real essence of control; fourth, the identification of three decision levels from existing research and learned opinion; fifth, the consideration of what is controlled, namely, operational areas of relevance to educational administration, and finally, the inclusion of these facets into a control framework.

Definitions of Control

Many definitions have been provided since the initiation of serious thought on the subject of control by the classical management theorists.

From an investigation of a wide variety of these definitions reflecting classical (Fayol, 1949:107), executive (Barnard, 1938:223), systems (Koontz and O'Donnell, 1964:537) (Litterer, 1965:233) (Katz and Kahn, 1966: 219) (Newman, 1951:72) and planning perspectives (Deverell, 1967:219) (Luthans, 1973:259), the following points emerged as central to a definition of control:

- it is directed at accomplishing plans, objectives and specifications;
- it pertains to the examination and checking of performance;
- it pertains to the whole organization and rests heavily on executive orders and responsibilities;
- it involves action in the form of readjustment where necessary.

Control Dimensions

As illustrated above, from definitions of the concept of control, certain characteristics emerge which are common to each definition or are mentioned frequently among definitions. Numberous writers on the subject of control have discussed these characteristics in terms of specific dimensions of control (Rose, 1934:28) (Holden, Fish and Smith, 1941) (Newman, 1951:4) (Luthans, 1973:259) (Dalton and Lawrence, 1971:13) (Kazmier, 1964) (Litterer, 1965) (Miner, 1971). These together with numerous other writers, indicate (with varying emphases) that a threefold classification of control dimensions can be identified. For the purposes of this paper they are labelled:

1. Setting Standards and Objectives. The establishment of criteria for performance and for results against which actual performance and results can be measured. This includes decisions which pertain to

the setting down of criteria of quantity, cost, time-use, or quality in a given task area. Related decisions include the establishment of contract terms, the setting of dates for programs, the establishment of levels of performance, etc.

2. Monitoring. The appraisal of performance against previously established standards and objectives. These decisions represent that aspect of control through which a board might check the activities of individuals and operations under its jurisdiction. This category includes the examination and approval of purchases, the setting up of committees to investigate present practice, etc.

3. Taking Corrective Action. The application of measures to adjust performance when it falls short of established standards and objectives. This involves the intent of bringing about improvements in an area where things are perceived not to meet given standards. Included under this category would be decisions to analyze a situation with the specified intention of correcting a problem. It might involve, toward this end, the rescindment of existing policies or decisions.

Decision Levels

Control, according to Kast and Rosenzweig (1970:470), is maintained by means of decisions which are made as part of an ongoing process. The "controller" has been identified by Eilon (1971:135) as a decision-maker, "since it is through his decisions transmitted to the system that he can adjust its performance and steer it along a desirable course". From such comments, it follows that the level of importance of a decision is important

in determining the extent of control exerted. A categorization indicating decision levels is therefore relevant to the study of control in that it places the dimensions of control in perspective with respect to their impact on the organization.

Several authorities have developed frameworks for discussion of categorizations according to decision level (Anthony, 1965) (Barnard, 1938) (Peterson, 1972) (Katz and Kahn, 1966). From these, a threefold categorization of decisions according to level can be identified:

1. Policy-Oriented Decisions. Decisions which affect more than one specific case or instance and become general rules. The term "policy-oriented" has been used to incorporate decisions such as those which involve major financial undertakings (capital budgets, borrowing on security, architectural contracts, purchase policy, etc.), and contracts with bodies of employees through collective negotiations.

2. Routine Administration. The making of specific decisions in order to implement existing policies. Such decisions are concerned with the handling of specific, rather than general, issues and are based for the most part on guidelines and specifications set out as a result of policy-type decisions. Included under this classification are decisions involving individuals rather than groups of personnel, the purchase of individual items rather than the consideration of broader capital and operational expenditures. Such school board activities as the approval of hirings and resignations, the adoption of committee reports, and the confirmation of the decisions of committees are also "routine administrative decisions."

3. Residual Decisions. Decisions which have no acknowledged implication for the future of the organization. The major consideration in placing decisions in the "residual" category involves the determination that they have little implication for the major concerns of the school system. Such decisions as the naming of a school or the reimbursement of a teacher for a phone call relate to specific cases. Even for these specific instances, the decisions are of a fairly trivial nature.

Operational Areas

One further area remains to be included in the framework, based upon the idea that an important consideration in the study of control in organizations pertains to the focus of that control. In regard to what is controlled, many writers on the concept of control have given considerable emphasis to financial considerations. Rose (1934) approached control from business, trading and financial viewpoints; Dent (1935) discussed control from the perspective of budgeting. This emphasis appears to be a characteristic one amongst the pre 1950 writers on control although Eilon (1971) in a recent discussion of management control, suggested that the emphasis on finance is still a prevalent one. He commented: "Control is often associated with financial matters, with production and inventory, but more rarely with other managerial functions" (1971:14).

In their 1941 study of organizational control, however, Holden, Fish and Smith did take a broader viewpoint. They referred to control over policies, control over organization, control over key personnel, control over wages and salaries, control over costs, control over methods and manpower, control over capital expenditures, and control over research and

development. Miner (1971), from a more general perspective described control over monetary resources, control over material resources and control over human resources. Similarly, Brown (1972:178) referred to a "socio-technical mix" in the control structure of any organization based on the principle that, basically, any organization will have both a technical system (pertaining to the layout of capital equipment) and a work organization (relating the people who carry out the tasks to one another).

Numerous categorizations of operational areas in educational systems have been suggested. One of the more recent and comprehensive is that provided by Gorton (1976). That writer referred to seven "task areas" in the administration of education. These are (a) Staff Personnel; (b) Pupil Personnel; (c) Community-school Leadership; (d) Curriculum and Instruction; (3) School Finance and Business Management; (f) School Plant; and (g) General Tasks (Gorton, 1976:43-44).

Operational areas along the lines of those outlined by Gorton provide the third basis for a description of control at a specific "Policy Level" in the education system. The resultant framework is illustrated in Figure I.

APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

Methodology

A sample of 25 school boards were selected from the population of British Columbia school boards by means of a stratified random sampling procedure according to the following criteria:

(a) School District Size. (The September 30th 1975 pupil enrollment for a district.)

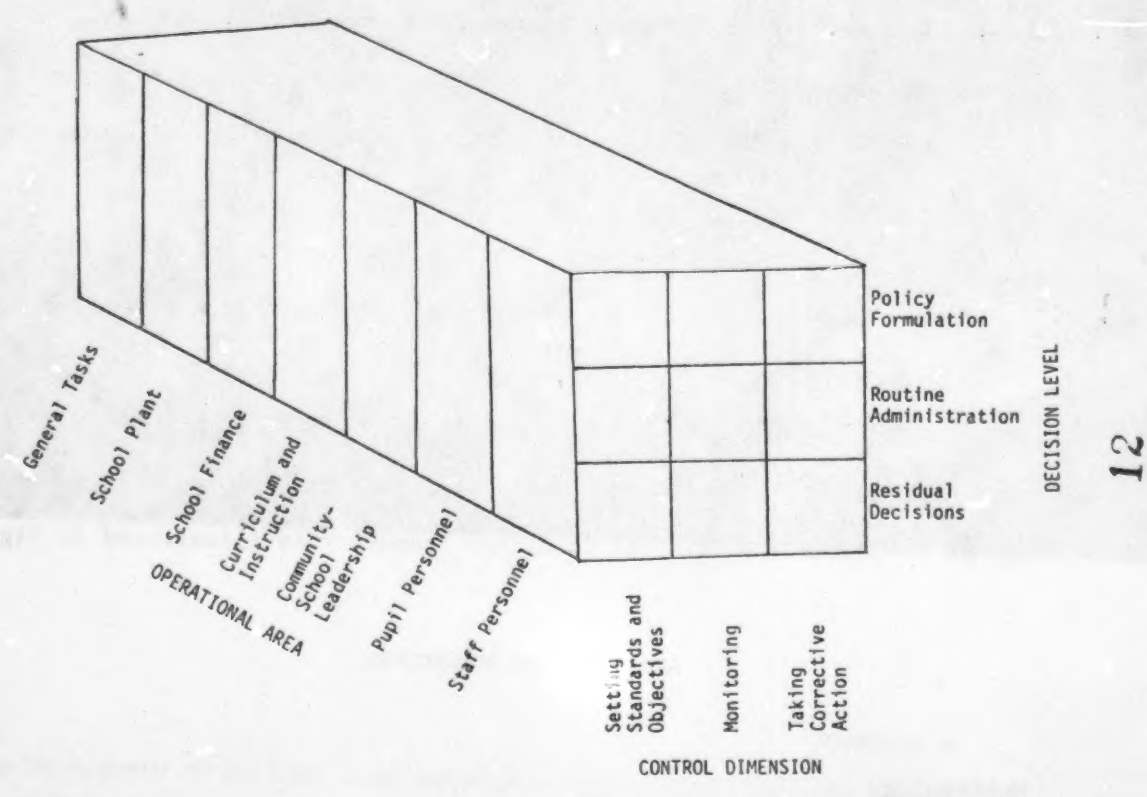

Figure I

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PREPARATION OF A CONTROL PROFILE

(b) Local Fiscal Effort. (The amount of funding generated locally was calculated and expressed as the percentage of the total revenue for each British Columbia school district. The sum of local district taxation, plus tuition fees and miscellaneous revenue, including deficits and surpluses from the previous year constituted local revenue. The percentage arrived at as a result of this exercise was used as an indicator of the degree of local fiscal effort for a school district.) Of the initial sample, 21 boards participated in the study.

The research problems concerned the degree to which school boards emphasized each facet of the control framework in their decisions. The collection of data pertaining to these problems was conducted mainly by means of a content analysis of the minutes of regular board meetings over a period of one calendar year. A total of 6,623 decisions were categorized, and data were reported according to operational area for control dimensions, decision levels, and control categories, in terms of the number and percentage of total decisions appearing in each. Sample categorizations are illustrated in Figure II. In addition, possible relationships concerning contextual variables and decisions made in each control category were investigated.

	Setting Standards and Objectives	Monitoring	Taking Corrective Action
Policy-oriented Decisions	- "there shall be one day in the year set aside for Professional Development" - entrance into long term contracts and agreements - statement of conditions relating to purchase policies	- approval of capital budgets - decision to develop a procedure to evaluate principals - set up committee to see where changes are needed	- application to Supreme Court for ruling of term appointments - call for administrative proposals for improvement of literacy in schools - introduction of bylaws concerning borrowing money on security of district - rescindment of purchasing policies - change in policy relating to student insurance - amendment to field trip policy
Routine Administrative Decisions	- acceptance of tender to transport special students - levying of non-resident tuition fees - statement of terms of individual contract - setting dates for an orientation program for Grade I pupils	- confirming appointments - approve leave of absence for professional improvement for specific individuals - adoption of progress reports etc. - evaluation of existing contracts - confirming resignations - achievement testing of Grade III pupils - check comparative marking standards	- relocation of portables - get Departmental "letter of authority" to maintain a teacher's services - payment of "loan" to teacher who has been overpaid - action concerning student suspension
Residual Decisions	- naming schools - reclassification of designation of a position from "chief accountant" to "Director of accounting"	- decision to send flowers etc. to family of deceased board employee - approve an honorarium for individual work done	- decision to increase parking fees - approval of a substitute for member of a committee - registration of complaint to "the town" about violation of truck route sign outside the school - payment to teacher for a phone call

FIGURE II

SAMPLE CATEGORIZATIONS

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: DECISION EMPHASES

Emphasis on Operational Areas

From an investigation of the extent to which operational areas were represented in school board decisions, it was determined that decisions relating to Finance and Business Management and decisions relating to Staff Personnel were made most frequently, while School-Community Relations and Curriculum and Instruction decisions were much less frequently. In fact, the latter area accounted for only 3.0 percent of the total 6,623 decisions made. The area of General Tasks was represented by only 0.2 percent of the total decisions.

When total decisions were analyzed for individual boards, it was found that the above pattern was generally consistent between boards, although the degree of emphasis on School Board Business varied markedly.

Finance and Business Management decisions were subcategorized according to the degree to which other areas were represented in them. Apart from General Finance and Business Management decisions, School Plant was most heavily emphasized, followed by Staff Personnel and Pupil Personnel decisions. Again the emphasis upon Curriculum and Instruction decisions was low.

Emphasis on Control Dimensions

Monitoring decisions accounted for 56.6 percent of the 6,623 decisions which were analyzed, while Setting Standards and Taking Corrective Action accounted for 29.7 percent and 13.7 percent respectively. For the total decisions, all 21 boards were in agreement in the order in which these dimensions were emphasized and were also consistent with each other in terms

of the degree of emphasis which was placed upon each dimension.

When this relative emphasis upon control dimensions was investigated for each operational area, however, several variations from the above pattern were observed. In several operational areas, individual boards varied in the order in which they emphasized control dimensions and in the degree to which they emphasized them. In fact, the overall emphasis on control dimensions for the area of School-Community Relations was greater in respect to Setting Standards than it was for Monitoring decisions.

The greatest emphasis on Monitoring activities was noted in the areas of Staff Personnel and School Board Business. The more even distribution of emphases on control dimensions in the area of Finance and Business Management was also noteworthy.

Emphasis on Decision Levels

From the examination of board emphasis on decision levels, it was found that Routine Administrative decisions accounted for 81.5 percent, Policy-Oriented decisions accounted for 14.9 percent, and Residual decisions accounted for 3.6 percent of the total number of decisions. Individual boards did not vary considerably from this general pattern. However, the following points emerged from an examination of emphasis on decision levels for each operational area and for each individual board in the study sample:

- Residual decisions were commonly made in the areas of Staff Personnel and School-Community Relations.

- There was a frequent tendency among individual boards to make more Residual decisions than Policy-Oriented decisions.

- Emphasis on Residual decisions in the area of Curriculum and Instruction

was almost non-existent. Only one board made decisions in this category. There was also a low occurrence of Residual decisions in the Finance category.

- Policy-Oriented decisions were most frequently made in the area of Finance and Business Management and represented 29.2 percent of the decisions in that category as opposed to the 14.9 percent for the total decisions.

Emphasis on Control Categories

In regard to control categories (combining decision levels and control dimensions) for the total decisions, the major decision emphasis was on the Routine-Level Monitoring control category while Routine-Level Standard-Setting constituted the second largest category of emphasis. These accounted for 52.5 percent and 21.2 percent of the total number of decisions respectively. Individual boards were generally in agreement in this respect. The category which was least emphasized was that of Residual-Level Correcting which accounted for only 0.2 percent of the total decisions.

When distributions were examined for different operational areas, it was found that in each area Routine-Level Monitoring and Routine-Level Standard-Setting received prominence in terms of first and second heaviest decisions emphasis. The emphasis on Residual-Level Correcting was consistently lower than that given to any of the other control categories.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS

Having developed a framework for describing control at a specific policy level, and having examined school board decisions in the light of that framework, several relationships concerning control and school district variables were examined using the findings described above. The contextual variables were School District Size, Local Fiscal Effort, Number of Meetings per Year, Number of Decisions Made per Year, and Number of Trustees per Board. For each area of investigation, several noteworthy tendencies were indicated. These are discussed in the following sections.

Contextual Variables and Emphasis on Operational Areas

An examination of correlations between contextual variables and the degree to which boards emphasized each operational area in their decisions revealed the following tendencies:

- boards of larger districts tended to place greater decision emphasis on Curriculum and Instruction;

- boards of districts with greater Local Fiscal Effort tended to place greater decision emphasis on School Community Relations;

- boards of districts with greater Local Fiscal Effort tended to place greater decision emphasis on Curriculum and Instruction;

- boards holding more meetings in the year tended to place greater decision emphasis on School Board Business.

In regard to Curriculum and Instruction, it appears that (although this constitutes the least emphasized of the operational areas) relatively

greater attention was given to this area by the boards of the larger districts and by boards of the more "fiscally independent" districts. Perhaps greater size and greater local fiscal effort provide boards with a greater sense of freedom to be more involved in an area is possibly recognized as the decision prerogative of the "the administration" or of the Provincial Government. If responsibility for such decisions is delegated, then perhaps the more "fiscally independent" districts and the larger jurisdictions feel it more incumbent upon them to have more of an active say in Curriculum and Instruction-related decisions. An example of this might concern "locally-developed" courses of instruction. Districts with greater enrollments probably have greater need for, and more room for experimentation with "locally-developed" courses. There were numerous decisions of this nature made during the period which was analyzed.

The indication of a possible relationship between Local Fiscal Effort and emphasis on School-Community Relations is noteworthy. It concerns the argument involving the effect of financial considerations upon the maintenance of local interests and initiative in education. This finding, if substantiated further, might add credence to the idea that less Local Fiscal Effort and greater reliance upon Provincial Government grants might be a move away from local community commitment.

The greater emphasis placed upon School Board Business as the number of meetings in the year increases indicates that, as boards hold more meetings in the year, the more relative decision emphasis they tend to place upon aspects of their own organization and the more they tend to deal with procedural-type issues.

Contextual Variables and Emphasis on Control Dimensions

Several possible relationships were indicated between school board contextual variables and the degree to which control dimensions were emphasized.

Concerning overall decisions, there was indicated a tendency for larger districts to place greater emphasis on Monitoring decisions and less on Standard-Setting decisions. This was also apparent in decisions made in individual operational areas and it was particularly significant with respect to School-Community Relations decisions and with respect to Curriculum and Instruction decisions.

Also in regard to the total decisions made, there emerged an indication that the more trustees a board had, the less it tended to emphasize Monitoring activities and the more it gave prominence to Corrective Action.

In decisions relating to Staff Personnel, it was found that boards which held more meetings in the year tended to place greater relative emphasis upon Monitoring decision whilst placing less emphasis upon Standard-Setting and Taking Corrective Action.

Several significant relationships were determined with respect to Pupil Personnel decisions. Boards of districts with greater Local Fiscal Effort appeared to place greater emphasis on Monitoring decisions whilst giving less prominence to Standard-Setting and Correcting. In this area also, it was found that the more decisions a board made in the year, the less it tended to emphasize Standard-Setting decisions. Finally, in Pupil Personnel decisions, boards with more trustees appeared to place greater emphasis upon Correcting decisions while placing less emphasis upon Monitoring activities.

Several findings became apparent from an examination of correlations for the Curriculum and Instruction area. Boards representing higher Local Fiscal Effort districts evidenced a strong inclination to place greater emphasis upon Corrective Action decisions pertaining to Curriculum and Instruction. The finding also emerged that the more meetings which boards held during the year, the less they were inclined to make Standard-Setting decisions, and the more they tended to emphasize Monitoring decisions.

In the Finance and Business Management area, it was found that boards which held more meetings in the year were more inclined to emphasize Corrective Action and less inclined to emphasize Monitoring decisions in their decision-making. Boards with more trustees were also found to place greater emphasis on Corrective Action and less on Monitoring decisions in Finance and Business Management.

Contextual Variables and Emphasis on Decision Levels

For the total number of decisions, there were no statistically significant correlations between the contextual variables District Size and Local Fiscal Effort and the relative emphasis placed by boards on the three decision levels. There was an indication, however, that boards which made more decisions in the year tended to place less emphasis upon Policy-Level decisions and greater emphasis upon Residual decisions.

In regard to Staff Personnel, no significant correlations emerged concerning District Size or Local Fiscal Effort. Correlations between the number of meetings held and decision levels did indicate that boards which held more meetings in the year emphasized Policy-Oriented decisions to a lesser extent while they placed greater emphasis upon Routine Administrative

decisions.

In decisions related to School-Community Relations, a noteworthy finding concerned the significant relationship between Local Fiscal Effort and the degree to which boards emphasized Policy-Oriented decisions. This finding seems to indicate that boards of greater Local Fiscal Effort districts tended to place greater emphasis upon Policy decisions, while they placed relatively less emphasis upon Routine decisions concerning School-Community Relations.

With respect to decisions made in the area of Finance and Business Management, significant findings pointed strongly to the tendency for boards holding more meetings to place greater relative emphasis upon Policy-Oriented decisions, while placing less emphasis upon Routine Administrative decisions. There was also the indication that boards making more decisions tended to place greater relative emphasis upon Residual decisions. Finally there was the finding that boards with more trustees tended to place greater emphasis upon Policy-Oriented decisions and less emphasis upon Routine Administrative decisions in the area of Finance and Business Mangement.

In the School Board Business operational area, boards making more overall decisions in the year tended to make significantly more Residual decisions and less Routine Administrative decisions pertaining to School Board Business.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing discussion of findings, several recurring ideas and tendencies emerged. These constitute the major conclusions together with a general conclusion concerning the framework which was used.

1. In regard to the framework, the overall model has provided an initial conceptualization upon which the description of control at a specific policy-level in education might be based. It has facilitated an examination of the type and degree of control exerted by boards in terms of the different facets of organizing for education at the school district level.

2. The type and level of control exerted, and the relationship of these to contextual variables, vary according to operational area.

3. No attempt is made here to suggest that findings point to school board effectiveness or the lack of it. What has been accomplished has been a description of decision emphases and an examination of the various factors which might influence them. Upon reflection, emphasis on various decision levels or control categories can not be taken as a viable indicator of effectiveness without consideration of a multiplicity of factors and relationships at the school system level. For research to come up with a figure concerning emphasis upon Policy-level decisions and then to state that "policy-making has not been emphasized enough" or that "boards are therefore less effective" seems erroneous. More research is needed and more questions require an answer before such conclusions as these can be drawn.

4. A tendency which was common in decision emphases in all of the

operational areas concerned the relationship between the total number of decisions made by boards and the relative emphasis which was placed upon the levels of decision. The strong indication in this regard points to the conclusion that greater "productivity" in terms of decisions (beyond a certain point) leads to a decrease in the relative emphasis placed on Policy-level decisions and an increase in emphasis on Residual-level decisions. The corollary to this statement is that school boards preoccupied with making decisions "for decisions' sake" tend to be more preoccupied with "ad hoc"-type decisions of little implication for the purposes of the school system.

5. Emphases placed by boards upon operational areas in this study were generally in agreement with the findings of other research. In this regard, findings were in agreement with those of earlier research in the prominence which was given to Finance and Business Management, School Board Business, Staff Personnel and School Plant and in terms of the consistently low emphasis which boards placed upon Curriculum and Instruction decisions.

6. The tendency for "greater Local Fiscal Effort" boards not only to place greater relative emphasis on School-Community Relations decisions, but also to make those decisions with particular respect to Policy-Level Monitoring and Correcting in that area seems to bring those boards more in keeping with the suggestion by Campbell, Cunningham and McPhee (1965:158) that "school boards are controlling bodies acting in the interests of the local community they represent."

7. That greater District Size and greater Local Fiscal Effort might be related to greater emphasis upon Curriculum and Instruction decisions

seems to indicate that these two contextual variables might give boards additional "freedom" to become more involved in that "interna" aspect of education, generally recognized as being predominantly a provincial government prerogative.

8. School board decision emphases are predominantly oriented toward Routine-Level Monitoring activities.

9. If Residual decisions can be equated with "trivia," then school board preoccupation with "trivia" was not on the whole extensive.

10. There appears to be a tendency for boards with more trustees to make higher-level and more corrective-type decisions particularly in the area of Finance and Business Management.

Recommendations

1. In regard to productivity in terms of the total number of decisions made by school boards, a major recommendation concerns school board utilization of time and effort. More decisions tend only to foster increasing emphasis on residual matters. Mere volume of decisions does not appear to be conductive to productivity in terms of the utility of decisions. Perhaps greater attention could be devoted to structuring agendas in such a way as to eliminate the inconsequential type of issue. Perhaps, also, matters of minimal importance to the system need not be tackled by the board as these could be delegated to specific committees or to members of the administration. The effort to make more decisions does not, in short, appear to be a fruitful one.

2. Another recommendation of importance to school boards concerns the minimal control which has been exercised over Curriculum and Instruction

in school board decisions. It appears that greater attention to this area by school boards is appropriate. Such attention need not be directed primarily at Policy-Level Standard-Setting or Correcting. Greater Monitoring activity would have utility, particularly at a time when Curriculum and Instruction continues to be an issue of some considerable public interest and public scrutiny. Perhaps it is time that school boards adopted a more active role in this respect.

3. Though the relationship between Local Fiscal Effort and the emphasis placed by boards on School-Community Relations requires further research in order that it may be substantiated (or rejected), the issue of "local initiative" and the consideration of local interests in educational matters remains a concern of importance. Even with greater government funding of education at the local level, channels should be kept open for school boards to have that element of freedom to make decisions of local importance, such as those directed at the review, approval and implementation of locally developed curricula.

4. Policy-level control is vitally important to school systems, but generalizations pertaining to the extent to which Policy-level decisions should be emphasized can not be made to all school boards. It is recommended here, therefore, that boards should not be preoccupied with the <u>extent</u> to which they make Policy-level decisions in relation to other boards. Of greater importance is the degree to which boards examine the <u>quality</u> of their own Policy-level decisions in terms of their value to their own school systems. It is noteworthy that very few of the decisions which were analyzed in this research pertained to "metapolicy" (policy concerning policy) or to the assessment of existing policy. Consideration of this would appear to be an important suggestion for boards in their decision-making activities.

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